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INSIGHT

FORNIGHTLY

Editor :
J. M. LOBO PRABHU, I.C.S. (Retd.)
Associate Editor :
LOUELLA LOBO PRABHU.

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER, 5 1973.

Food Minister, Mind These Mistakes

Dear Food Minister,

More than any other Minister, you hold the economy of the country in the hollow of your hand. Let it not be in the hollow of your head from these mistakes (1) The Supreme Court Judgment on the Constitution being that compensation "shall not be arbitrary, illusory and against the conscience of the law", Land Reform legislation reducing rents and compensation must be rolled back, as presumably that of the Mysore State has been on this objection taken by me as also the objection that compensation payable by the State on behalf of new owners would exceed Rs. 500 crores, which would add to the existing inflation. Land Reforms fixing a lower ceiling for irrigated land, is stopping private projects as well as inclusion of dry land in public irrigation projects.

(2) You have been described as "The Man against the Monsoon" because the benefit of the best ever monsoon will be lost to the artificial scarcity created by the independence in food policies given to the States, without even a ceiling price for consumers as a counterpart of the floor price to producers. The Divali prices, except in Tamilnad and Maharashtra record increases since last year to 50% or even 100% showing the confidence of the traders and producers that larger supplies will not depress prices. They have the example of sugar, which after a 32% increase is still selling at prices higher than last year. If you are not convinced that the Tamilnad policy of lifting levy and movement controls reduces prices, at least caution hoarders that a maximum price related to the price in the public distribution system will be fixed, on which a levy will be made first on the trade and then backwards to the millers and producers.

(3) The monsoon has induced complacency about irrigation while actually it should have facilitated extension of it through deepening of ponds and water courses. In any case, unless you can see that all irrigation schemes which are ready are implemented, you are again exposing the growing population to the gamble in rains.

J. M. Lobo Prabhu.

X ★ X

Opinion Poll On Candidates Before Elections

"Fortune makes him fool, whom she makes her darling" BACON.

The best ever monsoon and the highest ever prices for grain have disposed the Ruling Congress to think that the time is propitious for elections particularly in rural areas. Popular ministries are therefore being restored in U. P; and Andhra to ensure the administrative apparatus including the tours of ministers at public expence. Even so, if new ministry develops the infighting which has started or if the Opposition show their frustration in violence, that may be an excuse for postponing elections in U. P. while the popularity of the Ruling Party is tested in bye elections.

Elections have turned in the past largely on corrupt practices particularly provision of transport, entertainment, particularly liquor since Prohibition was ended, large payments to local leaders and bullies, in the name of expences, displays like processions, election booths, armies of volunteers pressing identity slips. Inspite of the statutory maximum, the fabulous expenditure has been openly incurred by Parties, without the candidate accounting for it. The Ruling Party is reported to have collected Rs. 20 crores already for the U. P. elections, about Rs. 20 for each vote required for a win. It shows the bankruptcy of the Opposition that they have not introduced their own Bill for electoral reform to be safe against the money power of the Congress.

Communalism is the next factor exploited in which the Opposition Parties themselves have helped the Ruling Party by leaving the initiative to it for all measures favourable to minorities. To the extent the Jan Sangh has been critical openly of

minorities, the voters accept the conclusion that any defeat of the Congress will be government by Parties, which will include Jan Sangh. On the other hand, the Ruling Party quickly corrects its mistakes like Aligarh University Bill and gives assurances like those for Urdu and Personal laws. If Opposition Parties wish to recover lost ground they may slow down on criticism and make constructive proposals which for minorities may be like assured employment for one member of every family of landless workers, which will benefit harijans largely, amendment of the Constitution in respect of the directive principle of a common Civil Law, amendment of the discrimination on religious grounds in the Presidential Order of 1950 so that converted Harijans and Backward classes who can be identified are not deprived of the privileges of their parent communities, since these privileges are revived on reconversion establishing that their conditions remain unchanged.

The Mass media, not only Radio and News reels but also daily papers, which attack government only to give verisimilitude to their real support, brain wash the electorate in favour of the Ruling Party. Mrs. Gandhi in particular emerges as the only leader not only in her party but in the country, to ensure stability and democracy in the country. Opposition Parties could agree on an alternative leader like Field Marshall Maneckshaw, as he has the distinction of saving the country from internal enimies. Otherwise, Opposition Parties must publicise alternatives to policies and projects of government, instead of remaining only fault finders, being caught, as they were recently, when asked for alternative Food Control measures.

Inspite of these advantages, the Ruling Parties lost recently in the Parliamentary elections for Ahemedabad and Dindigal. At Ahmedabad, it was definitely due to the personality of the candidate. It therefore appears that hopes of the Opposition parties must rest on the appeal of their candidates, particularly as most voters are disenchanted with Parties. Unfortunately, Opposition Parties do not have the means to project their candidates in competition with the glare available to the Ruling Party. It has struck no one that the Institute of Public Opinion, could take an Opinion Poll on candidates who declare themselves to it by a specified date. The Opposition Parties could see that their candidates do declare themselves and if the Ruling Party defaults, the inference will be against its candidates. The Opinion could be elicited from a limited number of persons. random selected from different strata. This is not undemocratic, as Opinion Polls precede Presidential and other elections. If the question is of cost, the candidates or their parties could contribute to it. The candidate emerging successful will draw the votes of those who care for intelligence and integrity in their representative. It may mean also a vital change in the quality of our democracy. Will Opposition Parties, at least on this sub'ect vital to their future, show that they can think.

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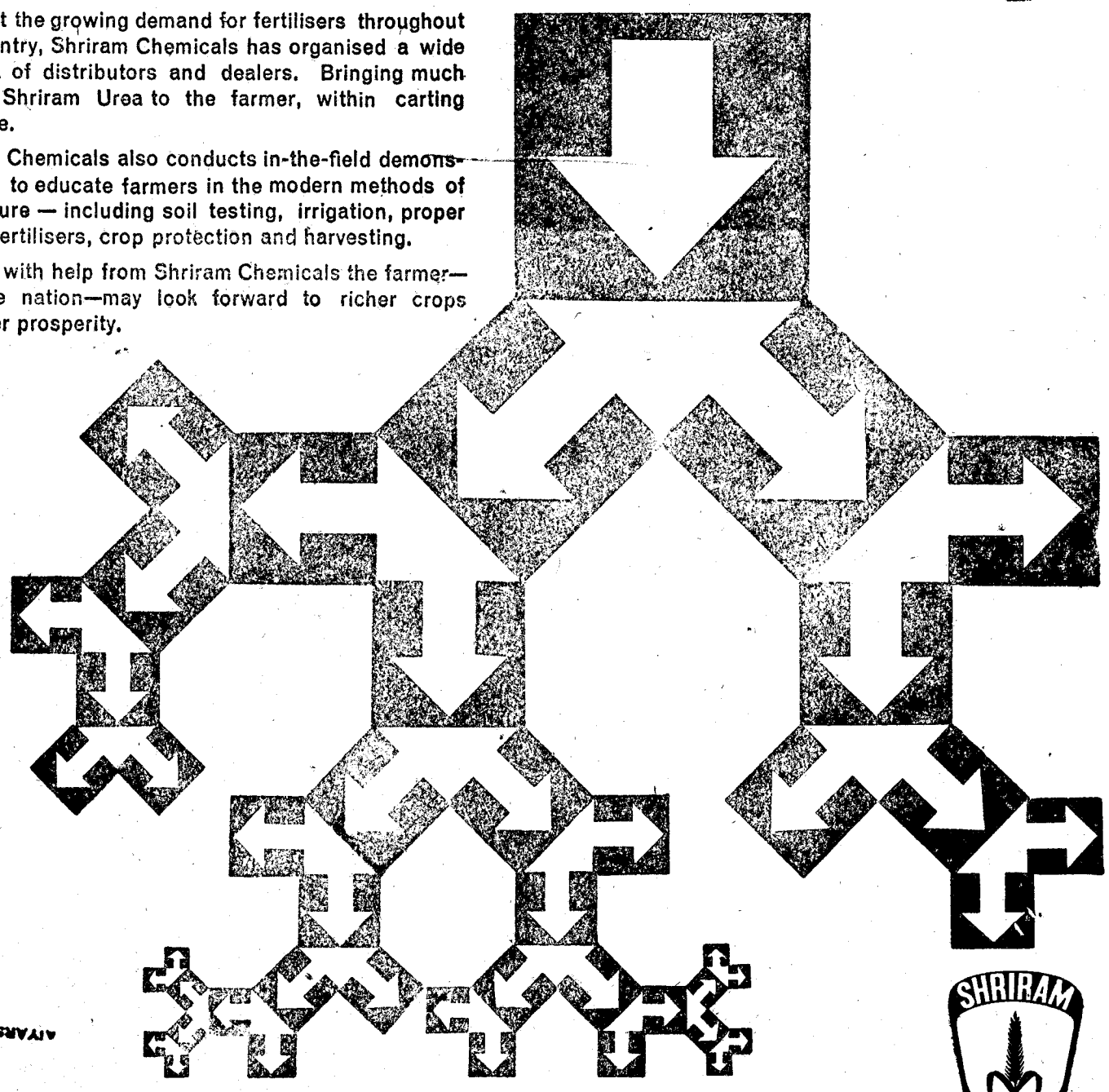

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Through A Periscope, Darkly

"Democracy flattens voters as it flatters them"

It is reported that Govern ment will allow a return of 12% on the investment in core industries. This will increase current prices by 17% for urea, 31% for cement, 4% for paper and 17% for steel, with a tidal rise on the cost of manufacture and construction. It would be better to allow concessions on taxes and wages in new industries, including activation of idle capacities in existing industries.

The increase in petrol prices by 75% to Rs. 2.73 per litre may have the political inspiration to handicap Opposition Parties in the U.P. elec. tions and certainly serves the propose of saving the budget by and increase taxes of perhaps Rs. 400 crores. Considering that the factory cost of petrol was 14 paise when the sale price was Re. 1.44, the factory could not exceed 27 paise so that the public pay nine times as much Government and to the cost of distribution. There will be little savings in foreign exchange as rates of private owners is half that of Taxies and of Government, not even 10% of the total. The other increases will be borne by the economy and people, with the worst ever inflationary consequences.

Though T. A. Pai has not stopped his speeches, he must be concerned that the hike in the prices of steel may take his steel factories out of the red but has brought Punjab industries near to closure. This collapse will be general, as already our prices were found by the Bureau of Industrial Costs to be 126% above world prices. Another of his wories is of coal of which 15,000 wagons are held up by the loco staff which wants its union recognised. Not only industries but power and transport are affected. The Prime Minister keeps on appealing to workers when she should take the courage to ban strikes.

Russia is again trying to send its cotton for being made into cloth by our mills. Last year this cotton was forced on mills at prices higher than the local ones. It should be condition of the deal the price payable will not be higher than the local price.

While Subramaniam talked about luring foreign capital, he thought changes expediting licensing are enough and that the report of the National Committee against foreign equity participation was sound. When in America, he must have been told that other countries do not treat foreign capital with suspicion and fear. He has also not appreciated the point Insight has made that when India buys foreign capital instead of allowing it to come on its own it gives employment to foreign workers, with its limited foreign exchange.

Only 7% of the expected import of 126,700 tons of newsprint has reached the country. Next year, the import at vastly increased prices will be only half the quantity imported last year. Government must consider economy in its own uses, particularly in bilingual publications, which only satisfy jingoism. Separate elections for Parliament and Assemblies also double the quantity used both by government and candidates. There may also be limits to the size of adver-

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tisements. There is another suprise in our being excluded by Saudi Arabia from the nine countries which will not have their oil supplies reduced by 5% every month. Since this is the reward for our support, it is time that we cultivated neither friends nor foes abroad.

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WHY IS BREZNEV COMING?

"Motives change a visit to a visitation"

There is and old maxim which runs "Timeo Danaos et Dona Ferentis"—"I fear the Greeks when they come, bearing gifts." Nothing could more aptly apply to the Russians, as there are always hidden motives, behind even the seemingly philanthropic or friendly gestures they flaunt, for the benefit of the world. For that reason, there is considerable speculation about the forthcoming visit of Mr. Breznev, to India. Is it merely to return the visits Indian dignitaries, who have been regularly knocking at the gates of the Kremlin, like pilgrims at the doors of St. Peter's? Or to collect the kudos for the re-routing of American wheat to India. (Apparently, the first wheat ship which docked, was sent here after the fall of the Allende government in Chile, as it was originally meant to ease the food crisis bedevilling the Marxist regime there).

Assuming that these are some of the reasons for his visit, they do not exhaust all the motives which might have brought him here. On the foreign affairs front, he may wish to assess how far the India-Soviet Treaty has made of this country, a docile camp follower of the U.S.S.R. True, India has obediently followed the Kremlin line, in recognising the Afghan regime, and parroting the charge of U.S. intervention in Chile, before the evidence of complicity was conclusively proved. Yet, there are times, when at least to give the appearance of independence, the Prime Minister appears to take initatives which may not be entirely pleasing to the men of the Kremlin. One such are of ambivalent behaviour, is the question of a rapprochement with China, on which the C.P.I. group in Parliament openly expressed extreme disquiet. Moreover, while expressing willingness to join the Asian Security Pact (obviously anti-Chinese in its implications), the Prime Minister also proclaimed at the Calcutta A.I.C.C. that the Indian Ocean should be a zone of peace, rather than a zone of big power rivalries (of the type currently taking place in west Asia where the Soviet and the U. S. Navy are locked in a deterrent display of their sea power). Actually, the Prime Minister's attempt to give the appearance of independence and neutrality, need not rattle Mr. Breznev, as he should know, better than anyone else, that Vishakapatanam is virtually a Russian base, while the Indian Ocean itself is almost a Russian lake.

Louella Lobo Prabhu

On the Indian side, it is possible that his visit will provide an opportunity for in-depth talks about armaments, as India's Defence production is almost exclusively integrated with that of the Soviet Union. Iran's military build-up, coupled with the possibillty that Iranian arms may find their way to Pakistan, may give an edge to such discussions. After the West Asia war demonstrated the military strategies of the future will be based on missile rather than air a tank power, India may be anxious to diversify its arsenal, with the sophisticated weaponry which enabled Egypt to give a better account of itself in the beginning and Israel at the close of the current war. In any case it would be dangerous for gavernment to intensify its dependence on any one country, which is thereafter in a position to call the tune. When she was in Ottawa, the Prime Minister did. in fact, recognise that a detente between the big powers meant that the former divide the world into spheres of influence, without reference to the small nations in the area. This, again, has been verified in West Asia, where the U. S. A. and U. S. S. R. were able to work out the terms of a cease fire not particularly palatable to either the combatants. Instead of seeking Soviet help for an arms race with U. S.—backed—belligerents in this region, India would do better and would be acting more in consonance with its Gandhian traditions, if it were to press, in the United Nations, for a total ban on the export of arms.

Economic matters could also be usefully settled. Currently, the rerouting of American wheat may garner the Soviet Union an undeserved harvest of gratitude: it pre-empted all other purchases when American prices were low and is now disgorging what could have been an embarrassing surplus of stocks, in view of the bumper harvest expected in the Soviet Union, this year. Even if the gift horse of wheat is not to be inspected in the mouth, there remain other outstanding problems: the newsprint crisis caused by the fact that the Soviet Union resiled on its contract; conversely, its insistence that India abide by contracts for the export of commodities, now in short supply; the large and steadily mounting debt of the Soviet Union to India, in respect of commodities exported by India and paid for, by the Soviet Union, with little more than out-dated Plants. Even satellite countries like Poland. Hungary and Czechoslovakia eventually revolted against this one-sided outflow of wealth to the Soviet Union. If there is still a desire of independence in India's foreign and economic policies, now is the time to assert that friendship is a two-way and not a one way traffic.

THE STRONGER FRIEND TENDS TO BECOME A FRAUD.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

It is a pity that protagonists of changes in names, have never read the lines,

— "What's in a name; a rose by any other names would smell as sweet".

Not realising that a change of name is not necessarily a change of fact or substance, the Chief Minister crowed over the renaming of Mysore as Karnataka,as though a miracle had taken place. What is worse, the Press published the event, without any attempt to analyse its implications, even setting forth a highly questionable record of the States' architects, from which the name of the last Chief Minister, Mr. Veerendra Patil was inexplicably excluded, though his personal standing with the people today, is higher than that of all his predecessors, except perhaps, Mr. K. Hanumanthaiya. Despite the distress conditions prevailing in the State, the renaming ceremony was virtually a Roman holiday, with elephants parading the streets of Hubli, a perpetual lamp lit at Hampi, and in Bangalore a mile-long procession following the idol of Goddess Bhuvaneshwari, with the State Congress President hitched to the silver car!

Unlike Shakespeare's "rose", it is doubtful, whether the State, with its new name, will be "as sweet." Its new name, "Karnataka" attempts to identify the whole State with a particular linguistic group speaking Kanada. According to 1971 census, those e mother tongue is Kannada, ber only 17.4 millions, including y Kannada speaking residents in neighbouring States, and State pitals. Since the population of the tate is 29.2 million, approximately 42% of the people regard it as an lien language. For them, the appeion "Karnataka" would be hardly a bond for emotional integration. Predic ably, the Maharashtra Ekikarni Samithi in Belgaum, reacted violently against this Kannada jingoism by taking out a black flag demonstration on Rajyotsava day

In the euphoria over the change of name, no one has calculated the hidden costs involved. State legislation will have to be duly amended; stationery both official and private, will have to be changed; seals remade, signboards re-lettered. Scarcely a measure of economy, at a time of financial stringency.

Mr. Urs will have to do some rethinking, on other matters as well. Change of name, to be meaningful, must be accompanied by changes of a more substantial character. In the not very distant past, there was a vehement agitation over alleged injustices to some districts in the State, which have yet to be dispelled. According to the Congress O leaders, schemes initiated by the last Ministry for a more balanced development of all districts in the State, appear to have been shelved without any good reason. New schemes by the present government do not rectify the imbalance. Recently, for instance, Mr. Malle Gowda had occasion to point out that given proper irrigation, particularly in respect of West flowing rivers, the district of South Kanara would have been able to bring 50,000 additional acres under cultivation. To date, this possibility continues within the realm of dreams.

In a final flourish of Kannada chauvinism, Mr. Urs announced that Kannada would be introduced at all levels of Education and administration. Earlier, it has been pointed out that this constitutes forcible imposition of a language alien to 42% of the people. English, though alien, is at least neutral between the various linguistic groups. It is also a passport to employment outside the State. Can the Urs Ministry provide enough employment within the State to all Kannada graduates? If not, has he a right to imprison them in the State, without any hope of employment or advancement? Should he also compel all members of the public to deal with a vernacular State administration, when the State has such a multiplicty of langauges? Should he not evaluate the comparative efficiency of district administration in the vernacular, before he proceeds to generalise that experiment at State level?

The whole farce of re-naming the State and celebrating it with such eclat in the present grim context, typifies the penchant of the Congress government for carrying out distracting diversionary tactics. That the skies were clouded and torrential rains poured, suggests that heaven itself was weeping over such criminal folly and criminal waste.

POWER PARTIES PROVE FROTH AS WORTH

EDITOR'S EPIGRAMS

To end care, begin to dare.

Blood is the stream and breath, the steam of life.

Fashion imitates, passion initiates.

One may smile and smile and be sad.

Aid when you can, crusade when you plan.

Luck is the silver lining of pluck.

A message to all intelligent, handsome, clumsy men:

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Are There Solutions For These Evils?

"Power poses evil as inevitable"

The resignation to falling standards on all sides appears to be a concommittant of modern democracy. In India, violence, corruption, extortion are no longer noticed, not only because they are general but also because they are irresistable. Papers which report them never suggest remedies and though their intention may only be to discredit government, they confirm the belief that nothing can be done. This week's tally from three weeklies establishes this.

BLITZ The Union Carbide which has 80 senior Indian officials on salaries of more than Rs. 4,000 monthly is dismissing some of them, including the son of the President and of Nandini Satpathi. This has led to charges that its Trawlers for prawns being equipped with latest communication devices, are spying for the American Navy and that the Monopolies Act is attracted. The proper remedy is to prescribe scales of pay and qualifications also for private sector jobs, which would rule out abuses covered by appointments of dependents of political leaders (2) The BPT Union is hitting the stomach of the nation by the dockworkers strike. Could not be a law be passed that all illegal strikes will bar consideration of demands made for a year (3) The income group Rs. 600-1,000, like the Mazagon dockworkers and Government employees who will receive Rs. 400 crores from the Pay Commission are ceaselessly increasing their demands, at the expence of the poor. The remedy is a National Wage structure (4) Train hold ups are emptying night trains in Bihar. If the Police are colluding, why not use the Army, which can get some target practice (4) N. P. K. Salve who is the Chairman of the new Company, which has purchased the Parliamentary Committee on Black Money. If he stays at Oberoi Sheraton, paying Rs. 200 a day, would he not know all about black money (5) If Kamlapathi, after making Rs. 10 crores is again to be leader of the U. P. Government, is not an outlet being provided in the elections for his money. As his leadership like that of Joshi in Rajasthan is from the lamposts elected, what are the Opposition leaders doing for change in election laws, particularly for simultaneous election for the assemblies and Parliament, which would reduce expences.

CURRENT (1) An embargo on arms to Arabs and Israelies, so that they settle their differences themselves. To be effective the embargo should include ourselves for arms we get from Russia. In fact, since Russia has learnt that what she does, America can do better, it might stop its wars by proxies (2) U. P. teachers, State Employees and Textile workers may frustrate the elections to the Assembly by strikes. Like rise in prices, rises in wages are contagious and in the present circumstances can be held up by a Freeze (3) Technicians leaving FACT, in sympathy with the previous Managing Director, who had allowed them to live on the Company. Similarly in Mysore, Minister Krishna disclosed that the Managing Director of Mysore Acetate had made sales to his friends and the Managing Director of REMCO had indulged in wasteful agpointments. If Directors of State Enterprises behave like this, should not the change be in these enterprises which should be sold out to those who care for their investments, including foreigners who can bring capital and know how? (4) Punjab Land Grab report has been shelved, saving the Speaker and Ministers who have resigned from being "Current" is also the Chairman of divested of land, which should belong to the Landless. Should not Government land be auctioned to those who have the means to get the best results, the landless being given opportunities for employment and even a share of the rent payable. (5) Black market in Fertlisers by Brahmanand Reddi's men implanted in Co-operatives. Congress and Co-operatives will have to go out together, when they create and exploit shortages which reduce food production.

MARCH OF THE NATION (1) Clearance by a packed Technical Committee of the Maruthi car, even while the CPI itself was attacking the Directors as self seekers compensated with licences for helping the Prime Minister's son. It would be more pertinent to insist that the twin stroke engine previously proposed is not changed as it is more suitable in the present circumstances of petrol shortage. (2) Vinod Chaturvedi, son of the Minister for Panchayats was arrested for murder only on pressure from the Centre. Another Minister's son, in Kashmir, was arrested for rape. A Minister himself in Mysore is implicated in the disappearance of the woman who had stayed in his house for three days. This arrogance of power can be checked, if the police, like the defence forces are accountable only to their superior officers or to magistrates and courts. (3) Another Minister in M.P. opened up barrage gates to delight his guests with the result 40 persons were drowned below the dam. Still another minister ran over and killed a 16 year old girl, without paying even little compensation to the father.

If so much is published, without any challenge, public opinion is calloused and moral values are shattered.

EVIL PALES AS IT PAYS.

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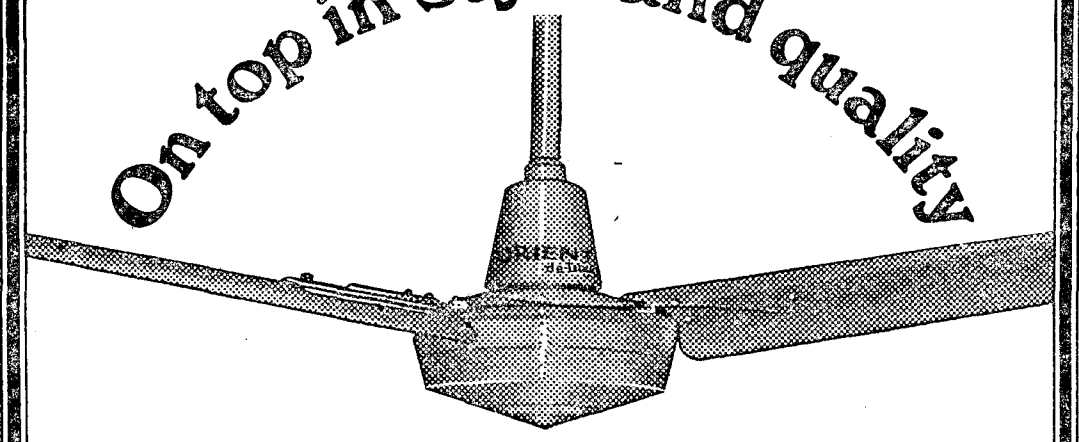

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FINANCE COMMISSION'S ROUTINE REPORT

The report of the Finance Commission does little more than update the figures, though even this does not follow the growth of revenues and of inflation. The Devolution of finances from the Centre to the States for five years has been increased from Rs. 4,266 crores to Rs. 6,000 crores while Central Revenues have increased from Rs. 3,027 crores in 1969-70 to an estimate of Rs. 5,081 in 1973-74. The growth of inflation has been even greater, that even for the last one year, according to the Economic Times Index, from 235 to 287. When the States appreciate these disparities, they may consider the extension of the period of repayment of loans, as insufficient compensation, particularly, as this extension will only mean that the Centre will increase its borrowings equivalently, with the same inflationary consequences.

In details also, though inovation was expected from the terms of reference, the report breaks little new ground. The assessment of the Non Plan gap does not attempt to distinguish valid from wasteful Non Plan expenditure, when for political and personal reasons, the latter constitutes the largest part of the increase. On the other hand, the statistical quantification of Non Plan expenditure may sanctify and add to the tendency to increase it. Even at the Centre, for instance, it was calculated that salaries absorbed all the taxable revenues, while in Kerala they added up to nearly the whole total of revenues. The least that the commission should have proposed was a Freeze at least in the interest of stability of currency.

On the proportions for distribution of Income Tax and Excise there appears no change, population being the main base, when strictly the revenues taken from each State are more relevent. Agricultural States, getting more than their contribution do not care for developments in trade and exports, which are the basis for the Central finance. In respect of Grants also the old formula is untouched though linkage with self help would have made States more prudent and productive with their plans and expenditure.

The proposals of the Commission rest on Zero inflation in the future, which is too much to expect considering the taxation and pricing policies of Government. To be more than a statistical machine, the Finance Commission should have considered these policies. There is no other statutory body for this very important restraint on financial indiscipline for which both Central and State Governments are notorious.

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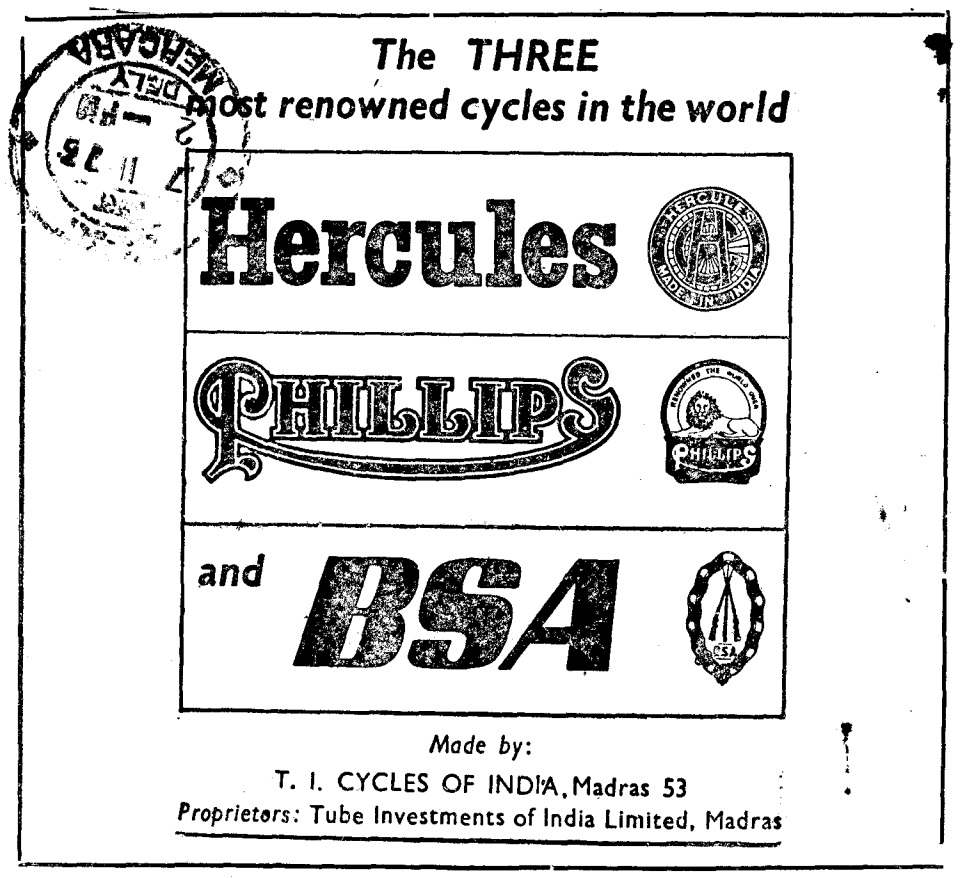

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